

CITY OF MORGAN HILL

Trails and Natural Resources Study



Prepared for the
CITY OF MORGAN HILL

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Draft Study
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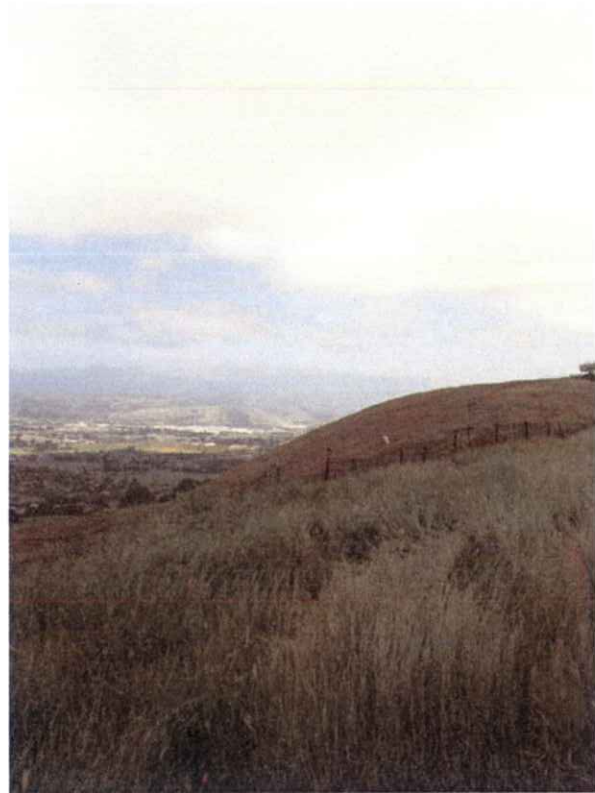
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SUMMARY & INTRODUCTION



1. SUMMARY & INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Citywide Trails and Natural Resources Study is to provide a pedestrian and bike system that will incorporate trails along creek corridors, parks and streets, and that will connect to public facilities, parks and open spaces. A citywide trails system will provide recreation, alternative transportation routes, and help preserve the open space and unique pastoral quality of Morgan Hill.

The Trails and Natural Resources Study is conceptual. It is not intended to show precise alignments or locations of improvements. Precise locations will be developed on a case by case basis following appropriate review procedures. Public review and comment is encouraged at all stages of the review process.

The Trails and Natural Resources Study process included:

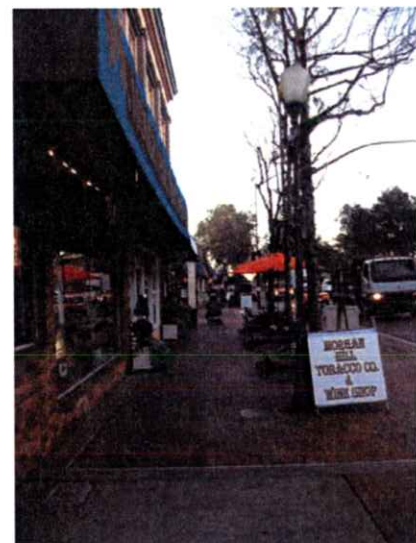
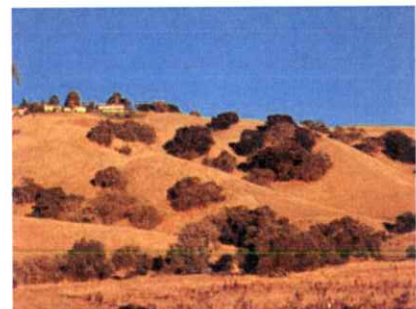
- Evaluating the importance of a trail system.
- Summarizing background information on existing public trails, existing local and regional parks, and desirable destinations and connections.
- Establishing goals with supporting policies
- Developing a physical plan showing recommended trails
- Proposing an implementation program for the entire trails system.

The formation of a Steering Committee with representatives from key community groups, resource agencies and city departments was invaluable to this Study.

This document will serve as a planning tool or guide for future planning decisions. Specific actions and commitments that will develop this study include: protecting trail routes, implementing the entire system by identifying needed rights-of-way within public and private projects; and taking full advantage of available funding opportunities. In this respect the Trails and Natural Resources Study is only the beginning in a process of working towards these goals.

PURPOSE

The Morgan Hill Trails and Natural Resources Study provides long-term direction for guiding future trail development. The projected continued growth for Morgan Hill and the region intensified the need to identify important routes and, in some cases, reserve trail corridors now. The plan responds to the increased demands for recreational opportunities and to an awareness of the values





the surrounding natural environment provides to the growing population of the area. The plan builds on the Morgan Hill Bicycle Plan but identifies additional linkages, pathways and commute ways for both pedestrians and bicyclists. To achieve this goal, the Trails Study is a balance of creative ideas, site conditions, and technical requirements as well as being responsive to natural resources and property owners concerns.

The Trails and Natural Resources Study will serve as a flexible, comprehensive, and long-range planning document. The Trails Study is not intended to be a trail users guide but is primarily a document for planning and acquiring for a future citywide trails system.

This plan summarizes background information on existing public trails, existing local and regional parks, and desirable destinations or connections. This information is the basis for an outline of clear goals with supporting policies, a physical plan showing recommended trails, design guidelines, and an implementation program.

Specific objectives that guided the planning process include:

- Link major public facilities including local parks, city facilities, schools, and regional trails systems.
- Plan for the inclusion of trails and linkages in future urban development.
- Locate staging areas, destinations and open space areas.
- Recommend trail standards.
- Identify trail priorities.

REGIONAL & LOCAL SETTING



2. REGIONAL & LOCAL SETTING

2.1 CITY SETTING

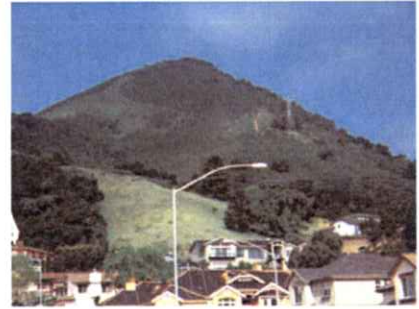
Morgan Hill is located in southern Santa Clara Valley, approximately 12 miles south of San Jose, 10 miles north of Gilroy, and 15 miles inland from the Pacific Coast. The Valley is approximately 4 miles wide and is surrounded by the Santa Cruz Mountain range to the west, and the Diablo Mountain Range to the east. Historically an agricultural community, Morgan Hill has grown into a small city with a quaint downtown and high-quality residential neighborhoods. Vast open hillside areas, numerous creeks, and surrounding agriculture create a feeling of rural open space within the city. Parks and open spaces abound, making Morgan Hill one of the last communities in the region with a charming, small town atmosphere.

By the 1920s the City was known for its agricultural products. The region boasted prosperous vineyards until Prohibition demanded that production temporarily cease. Around the 1950s Morgan Hill experienced an economic transformation from an agricultural center to a suburban residential community. Growth began to accelerate rapidly in the 1970s as Silicon Valley developed and workers were attracted to Morgan Hill's small town atmosphere, sense of community and reasonable housing prices. On November 3, 1973 the Morgan Hill Civic Center and library were proudly dedicated to the community of 7,000. Currently, over 37,000 citizens call Morgan Hill their home.

The city is bisected by Highway 101, along which runs the Santa Clara Valley Water District's Recharge Facility, "Madrone Channel." Highway 101, together with multiple cross-valley roads provide the bones for the city's development.

The voter-approved Residential Development Control System (RDCS) allows a limited number of homes to be built each year, according to a point system based on a variety of factors, including provision of public services, site planning, and architectural design. High-quality residential neighborhoods have resulted from the process. Small pocket parks, natural creek channels, and detention ponds are scattered throughout the city's residential areas.

Agricultural use continues in the lands surrounding the city. Large-lot ranch homes, natural open space parcels, and minimally developed hillsides contribute to the community's rural character. The City has policies that encourage the preservation of open space and agricultural lands to maintain this rural atmosphere.



(Sources: The City of Morgan Hill website, June 2006; The General Plan of Morgan Hill, August 2005)



MORGAN HILL PARKS & FACILITIES

The City of Morgan Hill maintains the following parks and other facilities (see page 6 for a map with park locations) (Source: *The City of Morgan Hill Website, June 2006*):

- Belle Estates Park - Calle Caballeria
- Centennial Recreation Center - 171 W. Edmundson Avenue
- Civic Center/City Hall (Senior Park) - 17555 Peak Avenue
- Community Park - Edmundson Avenue
- Conte Gardens Park - Conte Way
- Diana Estates Park - Diana Avenue
- Diana Park - Diana Avenue
- Fox Hollow Park - Fox Hollow Circle
- Galvan Park/Friendly Inn/Senior Center - 17666 Crest Avenue
- Hamilton Square Park - Via Corfino
- Howard Wiechert Park - Via Del Castille
- Interim Skate and BMX Park - Butterfield Boulevard
- Jackson Park - Trail Drive
- Mill Creek Park - La Arboleda Way
- Morgan Hill Aquatics Center & Future Sports Complex - 16200 Condit Road
- Morgan Hill Community and Cultural Ctr - 17000 Monterey Rd
- Morgan Hill Public Library - 17575 Peak Avenue
- Murphy Springs Park - Murphy Springs Ct.
- Nordstrom Park - Dunne and Murphy Avenues
- Oak Creek Park - Prancer Court
- Paradise Park - La Crosse Drive
- Stone Creek Park - Rosemary Circle
- Sanchez Park - Sanchez Drive

MORGAN HILL SCHOOLS

The Morgan Hill Unified School District operates the following schools (Source: *The City of Morgan Hill Website, June 2006*):

- Morgan Hill Comm. Adult School, 17940 Monterey Rd
- Barrett Elementary, 895 Barrett Avenue
- Burnett Elementary, 85 Tilton Avenue
- El Toro Elementary, 455 East Main Avenue
- Jackson Elementary, 2700 Fountain Oaks Drive
- Nordstrom Elementary, 1425 East Dunne Ave
- Paradise Valley/Machado, 1400 La Crosse Drive
- Walsh Elementary, 353 Main Avenue
- Britton Middle School, 80 West Central Avenue
- Ann Sobrato High School, 401 Burnett Ave
- Live Oak High School, 1505 East Main Avenue
- Central High Continuation, 17960 Monterey Rd
- Community Adult School, 17940 Monterey St
- Morgan Hill Site - at the Community Center, 17000 Monterey Road

Private Schools:

- Carden Academy Morgan Hill, Inc., 410 Llagas Rd.
- Saint Catherine School, 17500 Peak Avenue
- Oakwood County School, 105 John Wilson Way

MORGAN HILL OPEN SPACE

The City of Morgan Hill continues to obtain property for its dedication as open space for the community. Although not specifically intended for recreational use, the large open space areas along the ridge lines can include public access and outstanding scenic trail opportunities, including opportunities to establish staging areas to community and regional parks. Currently the city has dedicated 275 acres of open space, not including parks.



COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA

The County of Santa Clara boasts many regional parks and open spaces. Stretching from the Bay to the surrounding ridge lines, it also includes a variety of terrain and landscapes, the best of which are set aside as public land. The Countywide Trail Master Plan (1995, see page 11) includes policies and a map establishing trail routes that run within and adjacent to the trails proposed in this Study. The trail alignments and guidelines provided in this Study are in addition to the ones provided by the Countywide plan.



Santa Clara Valley Water District

The Santa Clara Valley Water District is a special district, governed by a seven-member board of directors, and is responsible for water supply, flood protection and watershed management in Santa Clara County, California. The district encompasses all of the county's 1,300 square miles and serves the area's 15 cities and 1.7 million residents. Their responsibilities flow from their mission: to provide high quality water, and to manage flood and storm waters along the county's 700 miles of creeks and rivers in an environmentally sensitive manner. The SCVWD owns and manages lands within Morgan Hill that provide trail and recreational opportunities, as well as grant opportunities.



City Parks, Source: The City of Morgan Website, June 2006



Regional Parks, Source: County of Santa Clara Website, January 2007



2.2 LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANS

Several existing plans provided information and trail route alignments that were incorporated into the Trails Study. These include the following:

Countywide Regional Trails Master Plan (CWTMP), adopted as part of the County General Plan in 1995, provides a reference for the various jurisdictions and private developers who design and manage trails in the urban areas of Santa Clara County. These guidelines are intended to be a model and point-of-reference for each of the fifteen cities within the County, as well as other special districts, and State and Federal Agencies who develop and manage trails within Santa Clara County.

Morgan Hill Bikeways Master Plan: In 2001, Morgan Hill commissioned a Master Plan for the study and analysis of bike routes through the city and surrounding county lands. The routes identified in the bikeways plan work hand-in-hand with the Countywide Trails Masterplan and this Trails and Natural Resources Study.

Morgan Hill General Land Use Plan, is a comprehensive, long-term plan for the physical development of the community. It represents the City's determination of the amount, type and timing of development needed to achieve the City's social, economic and environmental goals.

Coyote Creek Parkway Master Plan is a long-range plan to integrate and enhance riparian and wildlife habitats with existing and planned recreational facilities, including the Coyote Creek Trail. The Coyote Creek Trail is a regional trail identified in the CWTMO which continues south through Morgan Hill to San Martin and Gilroy. This plan was approved by the Board of Supervisors in February 2007.

The Santa Clara Valley Habitat Conservation Plan will develop a long-range plan to protect and enhance ecological diversity and function within a large section of Santa Clara County, while allowing for currently planned development and growth.

Coyote Lake-Harvey Bear Ranch County Park Master Plan is 20-year master blueprint to guide recreational facility development in our second largest park in the county.

VTA Bikeways Master Plan is currently being restudied.

(Source: City of Morgan Hill website, July 2006)